3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 Oll7 Murngin Oll7

Pl. 4A is *Mauwulan*, one of a group of artists from Yirrkalla, who produced many attractive bark paintings (Pl. 99A, 85E). He also carved the wooden figures of *Tjambuwal* (Pl. 130A, B), *Mulkuluri* (Pl. 133A, B), and others. 531 [115]

Pl. 4C is *Kumuntun*, an old Kakadu aboriginal,[51] one of the last of the original inhabitants of Oenpelli. This man was a storehouse of aboriginal beliefs and mythological stories. Pl. 55D and Pl. 70B are his work.

Pl. 4D is an aboriginal, *Wulkini*, from the Liverpool River area. He was younger than many of the other artists in the group. He produced Pl. 72D, Pl. 73A, and many others.

Although these four men, each in his own locality, painted many attractive pictures, there were many others who were equally skilled. I did not meet an aboriginal who could not, or did not want to paint. There is certainly no special artist class. [463]

In watching these men and others at work, I was impressed by their sureness. They seemed to have a fully conceived picture in their mind before they started to paint; it was seldom that an artist altered a design or corrected a brush stroke.

Although, for the sake of simplicity, I have referred to the designs on bark as paintings it is evident, in a narrower interpretation, that some are paintings, i.e. painting in spaces, and others are brush drawings, that is, the designs are built up by a series of lines. There are also numerous examples in which the figures are first painted and, when dry, details are added in fine lines.

51. This tribe, now almost extinct, was visited by Spencer in 1912.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OII7 Murngin OII7

*532 171

from Central Australia. Balfour[11] also figures a stone penis which is linked with the myth of the rain-man from Korporilja, near Hermannsburg, Central Australia.[12]

W. E. Harney, whilst with the expedition, found a carved wooden penis associated with a mythical man, *Borolo-borolo*, set up in the middle of a saline flat.[13]

The examples of the human penis, particularly those carved in stone, exhibit a remarkable skill in the shaping of this hard material. They constitute an ethnological problem in a continent where the working of stone has not reached a high level.

Carved and Painted Ceremonial Objects. Whilst the expedition was at Oenpelli the aborigines brought in a number of sacred objects, most of them from the Liverpool River area, belonging to mythical creatures and their increase ceremonies. Spencer[14] illustrates a number of these objects.

[411]

Decorated Implements and Weapons. Although the shield and the boomerang (two objects which aborigines in other parts of Australia spend much time decorating) are not used in Arnhem Land, many of the paddles and spear-throwers are painted with designs which, almost without exception, refer to some myth. The aborigines also engrave designs on their long smoking pipes.

1. HUMAN FIGURES IN WOOD AND THEIR CEREMONIAL OBJECTS. YIRRKALLA

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Human Figures carved in wood. At Yirrkalla I collected nine full-length wooden human figures and eight heads, all of which represented either mythological or spirit people.

Origin. Inquiries about the carved human figures of north-eastern Arnhem Land proved that they are of comparatively recent origin.

Mauwulan,[15] an aboriginal about fifty years of age, remembers, when he was a small boy, seeing an old Macassan trepanger, *Bopalindi*, show his father, *Duankin*, how to carve a human head on the top of a burial post. This post *Bopalindi* later placed as a memorial on the grave of a dead Macassan.[16] *Duankin* spent much time carving a similar post, which he took to the Macassan for criticism. *Bopalindi*, when congratulating the old man on his effort, suggested that the aborigines, like the people of his own country, should place similar posts on the graves of their dead so that they would not be forgotten so quickly.

[764]

Duankin taught his son, *Mauwulan*, the art of carving the mortuary posts,[17] he in turn passing the knowledge to others. As the aboriginal craftsmen became

11. Balfour (1951), p. 246.

12. I have not personally examined this specimen but from the illustration it appears to be a natural stone, bearing a remarkable resemblance to a penis. Mountford (1939c), Pl. 8, Fig. C, illustrates a similar example.

13. Pl. 116B; myth, p. 341. 14. Spencer (1928), Figs. 542, 543, Pl. XVI.

15. *Mauwulan*, one of my best informants (Pl. 4A) carved many of these wooden figures for me. He died the same day Mr and Mrs Berndt.

16. Berndts (1949) describe a Macassan burial. 17. See example, Pl. 136C.

[115]

It seems then that the Gunabibi (Kunapipi) as Professor Warner saw it after coming through the Rainbarngo and being amalgamated with the Wauwalak, did not necessarily diffuse east to Melville and Arnhem Bays, though the Wauwalak myth may have done so. It is more likely that it spread there up the coast from the Rose River country; ultimately the "distributing" tribe was the same, the Rembaranga (Rainbarngo) and the fusion with the Wauwalak on the upper Goyder may have occurred before the Kunapipi reached Blue Mud Bay. 177 773 796

In 1946, while at Roper River Mission, I was given a detailed myth of the movement of the Mumuna (or Kunapipi group) and the ritual (with no trace of the Wauwalak myth) from Blue Mud Bay south along the coast to the Roper River, which was crossed about thirty miles from its mouth, and shortly after, a Wadiri-Anyula man gave me an account of the journey of *Gilyeri-gilyeri mara-ahana*, the Travelling Woman, from the Roper, near the junction of the Limmen, and of the spread of the ritual, through the Alawa and on and on to Lake Woods and Newcastle Waters. Here the ritualists linked up with the route of diffusion from the Lower Victoria River through the Mudbara tribe and by Battle Creek. [115]

This, incidentally, completed the circle of the Kunapipi route, for a study of the rituals and myths and traditions show that it also spread from the Victoria River east through the Wadman, Yangman and Mangarai territory and thence north to the Rembaranga, and on to Blue Mud Bay, and thence, as we have seen, south to the lower Roper, and so on to Newcastle Waters.

At the present time, too, some of the Kudjika songs of the Kunapipi of the Roper River side, which I heard at the Elsey, are on their way south-west through Warlock Ponds and then eventually to Wave Hill, west of Newcastle Waters, and on even to Wyndham, that is, to East Kimberley. [533]

The doctrines are still very real to the initiated Mangarai, whom I have come to know during the past three years. We talk about the myth or ritual; we mention the sacred key and pass words referring to the "Mother", the bullroarer, the Yalmanindji, the "river" and "billabong" (womb) on the ritual ground, or we repeat the words of the chants: but let anyone pass by even thirty yards away and out of earshot—the subject is dropped immediately, until that person has really gone by. And how interesting it is to hear on the Roper almost the same ritual words as obtain at Yirrkalla, and then to hear them again from Djauan and southern Rembaranga and others on the Mainoru, south of Bulman Gorge, and 100 miles west again not far from the Waterhouse! When I arrived at the latter place in September, 1948, a Kunapipi ritual had been completed only a few days before. I saw the headman and others who participated. There, too, was the Kanalina and the Anggorna (Nanggoru) with the 773 796 171 [123]

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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CHAPTER VI

KUNAPIPI DREAMS

Kunapipi ritual and ideology, like all other aspects of native life and thought, find expression through the medium of dreams. The study of these requires not only personal acquaintance with the individuals whose dreams are recorded, but also sound knowledge of their cultural and traditional background. Their behaviour patterns must be compared with those of other representatives of the group; all social factors likely to contribute towards a particular dream should be analysed, and the individual's personality and psychological approach taken into consideration. In addition, the natives' own theory and interpretations of dreams must be considered.

For several months, at Yirrkalla, the dreams of a number of adult males were recorded daily. During the initial period of field-work, it was necessary to have approximately thirty male informants, each chosen for some specific reason; one was a headman of a certain linguistic group, another an artist, a wood-carver, a song-man, a leader of the Djanggawul or of the Kunapipi rituals, and so on. With such a group readily available it was convenient to record their dreams each morning while studying their social background. At the same time an intimacy grew up between the field-worker and the informants, so that mental reservations were reduced to a minimum. Detailed case-histories of each individual were compiled over the period of work, and the sequence of events within the social group was observed in relation to their dreams; these events were apparently modified or accentuated according to a man's peculiar background and associations. What had begun as a tentative experiment developed into an important aspect of study, which revealed the natives' psychological adjustment to their society under the impact of Misson and European contact. However, it was found necessary after a certain period to restrict the time spent on this work, since it had shown a tendency to dominate, and even in part to exclude, other aspects of equal if not greater importance.

It was however of great value to have this opportunity of studying hundreds of dreams, recorded in sequence, of a number of these aborigines, and to observe the wide range of subjects concerned, together with the themes which reflected each man's particular

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

APPENDIX I

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794 In the main body of this work some mention has been made of
796 ceremonial copulation during the performance of the Kunapipi.
831 Our examples were taken principally from north-eastern and southern Arnhem Land, with reference to the Roper River region; and for comparison with these the following data from western Arnhem Land are presented.

During our field work in the western Arnhem Land region, at the Goulburn Islands and Oenpelli, little reference was made to the Kunapipi ceremonies;[1] it was said that these were introduced by [177] Reinbaranga people from the south and south-east, in the direction of the Roper River, or that they came from the Milingimbi area to the east.

Recently, however, the writer's chief informant at South Goulburn ● [115] Island, a Maung man named Small Ngolaman (or Nangolominj), who is incidentally one of the very few literate aborigines on the north coast of the Northern Territory, and who has been "keeping track" of certain problems in the region during our absence, writes that the Kunapipi is known to some of the mainland men who visit Goulburn Island. The Kunapipi, as we are already aware, is carried out in the vicinity of Oenpelli, and in the upper Liverpool River area, under the auspices of Reinbaranga or Milingimbi leaders, and is known (but not practised) at Goulburn Island.

Small Ngolaman's preliminary statement[2] reveals some very interesting features; for example, the use of one girl on the sacred ground needs more accompanying data, since it bears a striking similarity to the more western type, as carried out by the old Laraki:a tribe; this will however be dealt with later. Ngolaman's informant [115] was a Maung man, named Inmindjur.

"Messengers are sent out, notifying the various groups that the [203] Kunapipi is to be held. When the people come in to the ceremonial camp, the rituals begin. The Kunapipi headman chooses a young 794 girl, and takes her away from the main camp to the sacred ground. 796 She is placed in a big bough shade or hut, recently built by the young initiated men; she lies there on her back. Two holes are dug, one on 831 each side of her; a strong post is placed in each, and rammed

1. *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land*, Chapter IV, Section IX.
2. *Correspondence* to R. Berndt, October 4th, 1948.

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
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language. Their society is constructed on the moiety principle, and descent is in all cases primarily patrilineal. There is no clearly defined tribe, but a series of linguistic groups associated with clans; all of these may be called, collectively, the Wulamba bloc of the Miwaitj language group (referring to the sum total of the different dialects). Yirrkalla is situated on the extreme north-east corner of Arnhem Land between Melville Bay and Cape Arnhem, and Aborigines gather there from places as far distant as Blue Mud and Caledon and Trial Bays, Rose River, and Woodah and Groote Islands in the south and south-east, and Arnhem and Buckingham Bays, Elcho, English Company and Wessel Islands in the north-west. Milingimbi is in the Crocodile Island group on the central-north coast; it is also a meeting place for members of many groups, particularly those from the mainland around the Blyth, Goyder and Woolen Rivers.

Virtually all the writer's field work has been carried out through the medium of the native language, both at Yirrkalla and Milingimbi. Knowledge of local dialects is essential in social anthropological work, and particularly in a study of Aboriginal religion. Field work at Yirrkalla was carried out in 1946–7 and at Milingimbi in 1950 (a total period of thirteen months actually working on the field in this particular region); the first period was made possible by grants from the Australian National Research Council, and was under the auspices of the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, while the latter period was financed by grants from the Research Committee of the University of Sydney and the Department of Anthropology of the same University. Writing up of this material was also made possible by grants from the Research Committee.

So many informants have helped in the process of collecting the data presented here that a list of their names would be tiresome and meaningless to the reader. Not only main *dua* moiety headmen, but also those of the *jiritja* moiety, contributed; and these were members of many linguistic groups. In addition, attitudes of local Aboriginal women towards this religious cult were discussed with them by my wife (Catherine Berndt), and this aided directly the analysis of certain sections. This study of the Djanggawul, then, does not express solely the information and attitudes of male natives, but takes into account both male and female elements in the culture. The practice in recording the interlinear phonetic renderings of the songs was for informants belonging to a particular area through which the Djanggawul passed to put forward those songs themselves, for it was their country and they were expected to have more complete knowledge of the songs. In this way, each

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
OII7 Murngin OII7

Foreword

115 part was presented by the most capable leaders and song men
124 available for the particular territory concerned. This was the case
126 also in recording the myth, which unfortunately cannot here be presented in its phonetic rendering. All features of the myth and songs were collectively discussed, and interpretations made by the Aborigines themselves.

121 A considerable amount of thought has gone into the question of
128 presenting the available data on the Djanggawul. It has finally been decided to present as much as possible of the 'raw' material without, apart from interpretation and partial analysis, engaging in theoretical discussion, for material of this type obviously lends itself to such treatment. It is our contention that the rôle of the anthropologist in the Australian Aboriginal field should be one of recording data, and of presenting these in an accessible form, so that the maximum amount of material may be available for the consideration of students interested primarily in theory. That is not to say that we disparage that particular branch of anthropological science, but that we ourselves are more intimately concerned with Australian Aboriginal problems as such and, although taking into account the wider implication of our material, we must of necessity restrict our outlook to some extent. This, to us, is an important point, for we in Australia are acutely aware of the limitations of available anthropological data. Considering the geographical extent of the Australian continent, and the apparent diversity of Aboriginal cultural groups within it, we must admit that our knowledge of these societies is sparse. It is our duty, as we see it, to compensate in some degree for this deficiency. We do of course realize that, although our problems seem to us momentous, they diminish somewhat with distance, and when viewed in relation to the sum total of human experience throughout the world they become of much less pressing significance.

000 During the last two decades Australian Anthropology has received an impetus, principally through the personal efforts of Professors A. P. Elkin and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, and the Australian National Research Council has sent on to the field a series of anthropologists: this activity, and its results, have helped to counteract in some degree the errors of the past. Nevertheless, we in Australia are aware that although much has been done, there still remains more to do.

To say 'errors of the past' is not to disparage the monumental works of Sir Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, Carl Strehlow and others. What they lacked in anthropological method they made up in energy, and in their power to stimulate interest among anthropologists and others; they inspired, for instance, Emile Durkheim

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
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remembers of how it felt and what it meant to him as an individual; the text referred to presents the norms and modes of the society.

When I arrived in the Murngin country the men who had been on board the sailing vessel with me very quickly spread the news of my arrival among all the people. A number of the older men came to see me. Among them was a man who, I discovered, could speak a fair amount of English. He and I talked. I learned his country was on the mainland farther to the east; although he spoke English his thinking was native; and he considered himself, and was looked upon, as a person of consequence and authority among his people.

Across his chest and on his upper arms were ritual scars from self-inflicted wounds which had been filled with ashes. I judged him to be a man of about 45, possibly a bit older. He told me that his name was Mahkarolla. It was not long until we began our discussions, he telling me about his people and I telling him about mine. He became my best informant. We went out hunting together. We did together many of the things common to the daily life of a Murngin. He took me on my first canoe expedition away from Millingimbi Island to some of the other islands in the Crocodile group where a great ceremony was being held in honor of Bapa Indi, the python totem. It was during this first expedition that we became aware of our mutual dependence and friendship. Thereafter we were constantly together.

The next sections are told by him. I have translated his English, much of it pidgin, and his use of Murngin into standard English and have arranged what he told me in a simple chronology.

"When I Was a Little Boy"

I don't remember myself when I was very little. When I was a little larger I wanted to go to the countries of other clans and see places like Elcho Island and the Goyder River (map, page 40) and see how people lived and what they did and learn their language, but I was too little. All this was before I was circumcised.

I had heard my older brothers and some of the old men talk about Kopang and Macassar and the black men who lived to the west and who talked a language we little children could not understand (pages 453-458). I, too, wanted to go there and see those countries and ride on Macassar prahus which came to see us when the wind was from the East, but I was too little. Some of my brothers and some of the old men had been to those countries and a few of these men, while they were there, had Macassar women for wives. Charli Charli Sit-Down, my older brother, fell to the deck from the mast of a Macassar ship. He broke his back and still lived.